DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 427 493 EC 307 064

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TITLE	Assessment, Identification and Placement of Second Language Learners: The Chester Upland School District Model. Neumann College Occasional Papers in Education #38.
INSTITUTION	Neumann Coll., Aston, PA.
PUB DATE	1998-05-09
NOTE	9p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Neumann College Division of Education and Human Services, One Neumann Drive, Aston, PA 19014; Tel: 610-459-0905.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Educational Planning; Elementary Secondary Education; English (Second Language); Evaluation Methods; Individualized Education Programs; *Language Minorities; *Minority Groups; *Second Language Learning; *Student Evaluation; *Student Placement

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a procedure for the assessment, identification, and placement of second language learners in the Chester Upland School District in Pennsylvania. The second language learner educational program is designed to: (1) make instructional use of both English and the student's native language; (2) enable second language learners to achieve English proficiency and academic mastery of subject matter content and higher order skills, including critical thinking, so as to meet age appropriate grade promotion and graduation standards in concert with the National Education Goals; (3) develop the native language skills of second language learners; and (4) include the participation of English-proficient students if the program is designed to enable all enrolled students to become proficient in English as a second language. The paper discusses theoretical perspectives, steps in identification and language assessment, the educational placement, referral for screening, the Suggested Instructional Plan process for second language learners, the line of inquiry, psychological evaluation, Individualized Education Program, and placement in specially designed instruction. (CR)

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OCCASIONAL PAPERS IN EDUCATION # 38

ASSESSMENT, IDENTIFICATION AND PLACEMENT OF SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS: THE CHESTER UPLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT MODEL

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May 9, 1998

Introduction:

The purpose of this paper is to present to the reader a procedure for the assessment, identification and placement of second language learners in CUSD. The paper will be divided in several sections: Theoretical perspectives, steps in identification and language assessment, the educational placement, referral for screening, the IST process, the line of inquiry, psychological evaluation, IEP and placement in specially designed instruction.

Theoretical perspectives:

There are at least three general areas that we must consider when addressing the educational needs of second language learners (SLL): issues pertaining to language, affective issues and contextual issues.

Language

Second language learners come to school with a language. They have been learning their native language for at least five years. Second language acquisition is not a process of discovering what language is, but what this language is. Second language development is a difficult process because the learning process depends on the learner's contextual background, motivation to learn the second language and pre-existing knowledge of vocabulary in the first language. Second language acquisition will be learned at a different rate by each individual learner.

Acquiring the first language is a monumental task. In this discuss we will briefly mention five areas of language that will have been learned by a typical SLL: (1) phonology, or the sounds of the language, (2) vocabulary, or the sound of the language, (3) grammar, or how the words are put together to make sentences in the language, (4) discourse, or how sentences are put together to tell stories, make arguments or explain how something works, and (5) pragmatics, or the rules about how to use the language (Tabors, 1997).

The literature (Snow, 1983; Wong-Fillmore, 1991) suggests that there are at least two types of second language development. Simultaneous acquisition of two languages occurs when children are exposed to both languages from a very early age. Sequential acquisition occurs when a child begins

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to learn a second language after the first language is at least partly established. For children in the CUSD the sequential acquisition is the most common.

Tabor (1997) notes that there is a consistent developmental sequence in the acquisition of a second language. First, there might be a period in which the child continues to use the home language, in hope of making themselves understood. In the second period, children discover that this strategy does not work, and they enter a non-verbal period. This period serves the purpose of collecting data about the new language, and perhaps a period of experimenting sounds. During the third period the children begin to go public using some words and phrases in the new language. This period is characterized by its utilitarian nature. Children will learn words and phrases that they need to survive in the school. In the fourth period, children begin to develop productive use in the second language. The focus is the development of language for interactional purposes (Tabor, 1997, p. 39). Once the children begin to use the second language as an interactional tool (BISC), then children continue to experiment with the rules of the second language and to develop vocabulary. The final product of this period is the development of cognitive academic language (CALP). Cognitive academic language is what the children will need to succeed in school, especially as they continue their education beyond the sixth grade.

Faltis and Hudelson (1998) suggest that second language acquisition and development depend on two key factors: (1) access to, and (2) participation in, legitimate social activities in which SLL's use multiple forms and functions of language with the goal of understanding and using new discourse appropriately to accomplish their purposes (p. 97). Discourse includes talking and writing in context.

Affect

Second language learners may have experienced ignorance, prejudice, or disrespect, or may have even been the targets of abuse (Echevarria & Graves, 1998). In order to address the affect of SLL's the teacher's must acknowledge and validate the children experience and sense of themselves. Then the teachers, through the curriculum, have to develop strategies to change the way children view their world and school experience. Viewing consists of the children: point of view, attentional patterns interpretations, explanations, and assumptions and believes. They also have to address ways in which children's "doing" patterns affect their learning. The "doing" patterns include: action patterns, interactional patterns, language patterns, and non-verbal patterns (O'Hanlon, 1998).

Context

The contexts in which children live provide the pre-requisite skills that are necessary for development cognitive academic language. These include time patterns, physical environment/spatial location, cultural/racial background, family historical background, connections to others and spirituality. Contextual learning will usually affect the way the curriculum is set up to teach certain concepts such as social studies, first language and second language, reading and the language arts. The identification of the context that the SLL bring to the classroom is important because slow triggers are almost always cultural in nature and will have to be identified as we conduct an initial line of inquiry.

Steps in identification and language assessment:

Upon arriving to school the SLL will be administered a Home language survey. If the determination is that the child is English dominant, then they will be placed in the regular English classroom. If the child is identified as a SLL, then the child will be placed in the ADELANTE (Assessment to Determine English Language and ANTEcedent knowledge) would probably be a more positive way of presenting this concept.

In the ADELANTE Center the SLL will be administered a measure of language dominance in English and the second language. Records from the previous school will be sought. The following additional information will be sought: cultural/racial

background and propensities, family/historical background, biochemical and genetic background, and connections to other children. The child will be assessed to determine preferred mode of communication and learning style.

The following assumptions are considered when assessing the language and culture of children to placement in the educational process:

1. The Chester Upland School District recognizes that there are many children from a language minority background in the School District. A student is Second Language Learner if he/she "has sufficient difficulty spelling, reading, writing, or understanding the English language and whose difficulties may deny such individual the opportunity to learn successfully in classrooms where the language of instruction is English or to participate fully in our society due to one or more of the following reasons:

1.1. a child whose native language is a language other than English and comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant;

1.2. a child that comes from an environment where a language other than English has had significant impact on such a child's level of English language proficiency, or

1.3. a child that is migratory and whose native language is other than English and comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant (Public Law 103-382, sec. 7501).

2. The Chester Upland School District desires to provide an educational program for Second Language Learner that:

2.1. makes instructional of both English and the student's native language,

2.2. enables Second Language Learners to achieve English proficiency and academic mastery of subject matter content and higher order skills, including critical thinking, so as to meet age-appropriate grade-promotion and graduation standards in concert with the National Education Goals.

2.3. may also develop the native language skills of Second Language Learners, and

2.4. may include the participation of English-proficient students if such program is designed to enable all enrolled students to become proficient in English as a second language.

Entry Criteria

The students will enter the Alternative Language Program if they test at the pre-production or early production level of English language development. The instrument that will be used is the Woodcock Munoz Language Dominance Test. The child will score between 0 to 33rd percentile.

Educational placement

The SLL child will be placed in one of three suggested programs: English as a Second Language, sheltered English or transitional Bilingual Education.

English as a Second Language

English as a Second Language is an educational methodology that teaches speakers of other languages how to speak English. The SLL learns to use English to accomplish their academic, personal and social goals with the same proficiency as native speakers of English. In the school environment SLL need to be able to use spoken and written English both to acquire academic content and to demonstrate their learning.

Krashen (1982) indicates that the development of English is similar to the development of L1 in that children acquire most of their second language skills through social interactions. Children learning

English progress through several stages as follows (Krashen, 1982):

(1) Preproduction. During this stage expressive language skills in the second language are minimal or missing, but comprehension skills are beginning to develop.
(2) Early production. Comprehension skills though still limited are progressively improving. The use of single words or short phrases in the second language emerges.
(3) Speech Emergence. As SLL are introduced to the new vocabulary, they begin to produce longer phrases and more complete and complex sentences.
(4) Intermediate fluency. Receptive language skills are adequate. Children are able to produce more complex and longer sentences with fewer errors in English. Information processing is slower than native speakers are because SLL have to translate to understand the content of communication.
(5) Advanced Fluency. This includes SLL's who demonstrate advanced receptive and expressive skills in English. Although fluent, many SLL continue to process information at a slower rate in English than in there L1, especially in memorization, retrieval, and encoding.

Sheltered Instruction

This approach teaches academic subject matter and its associated vocabulary, concepts and skills by using language and context to make the information comprehensive (Echevarria and Graves, 1998). Feltis (1993) indicates that the term "sheltered" indicates that such instruction provides refuge from the linguistic demands of mainstream instruction, which is beyond the comprehension of English-language learners. Sheltered instruction provides assistance to learners in the form of visuals, modified texts, and assignments, and attention to their linguistic needs.

Bilingual Education

Bilingual education is the use of two languages for instruction. In the U.S., bilingual education is the use of English and another language in instruction. Bilingual education has been practiced in the U.S. for over 200 years.

Both native English-speaking students and native speakers of other language participate in bilingual education in the U.S. For example, both native Spanish and native English speakers might participate in an English-Spanish bilingual education program. Foreign language "immersion" programs, popular with native English speaking parents who wish their children to learn another language, are one form of bilingual education.

In practice, an LEP, bilingual education student in the U.S. receives part of their instruction in English and part in another language. A significant portion of their day is devoted to English as a Second Language instruction, in which the student receives intensive assistance in learning English. Other classes teach a student content areas — like math, sciences, and social studies — through a mix of English and their native language or in their native language.

Suggested Instructional Plan for Second Language Learners

The figure presented below suggests an instructional plan for SLL children in the CUSD. It considers the language progression of the children as measured with the Woodcock-Munoz, where there is an entry and an exit score for each level of ESL. Krashen (1982) model has been used to determine the level of ESL, sheltered instruction and mainstream classes. It is understood that until the SLL is transferred to an all-English Regular curriculum, adaptations to the curriculum will be implemented.

The program to which the SLL is assigned will be determined by the results of the Language Dominance Test and prerequisite skills. The following

interventions suggest by Echevarria and Graves (1998) will be considered:

- focus on the strengths of the student,
- determine that the curricula and instructional materials are effective with other students who are learning English,
- plan specifically around the linguistic characteristic of the learner,
- identify what students can and cannot do in academic and linguistic endeavors,
- confer with parents regularly and involve parents in the teaching and learning process,
- use alternative approaches to teaching such as peer teaching, partner sharing, cooperative learning, and cross-age tutoring,
- provide emotional security for the students by building a positive supportive relationship while maintaining high expectations,
- encourage goal setting and consistent measurement of academic progress with mechanism of self-report and regular reports to parents,
- make directions clear and simple and adjust workload and time requirements
- model process and strategies, and
- plan specific written agreements with students that clarify expectations and emphasize self-regulated learning. (Echevarria and Graves, 1998: pp. 22-

English Proficiency Levels	CUSD CORE CURRICULUM FOR SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS				
	English Language Development	Curriculum for SLL classified as in need of specially designed instruction			
		Native-Language Instruction	Sheltered Instruction	Mainstream Classes	self-image Cross-cultural
Fluent English Proficient				All Subjects	Weave Throughout The Core Curriculum
Advanced 98/90 to 100/90	ESL-Advanced	Language Arts or other Subject enrichment Optimal		All Subjects	
Fluent 82/90 to 95/90	ESL-4 Intermediate fluency	Language Arts	Transitional Language Arts, Social Studies	Art, Music, PE, Math, Science	
Limited 34/90 to 67/90	ESL-3 Speech emergence	Language Arts, Social Studies	Math, Science	Art, Music, PE, Electives	
Very limited 5/90 to 18/90	ESL-2 Early production	Language Arts, Math, Social Sciences, Science (Concepts)	Math, Science (problems, computation, and experiments)		
Negligible 0/90 to 2/90	ESL-1 Preproduction	Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, Science	Art, Music and P.E.		

If the SLL's behavior or academic performance does not improve after the teacher implements the program of study suggest by the ADELANTE Center, referral to the Instructional Support team is recommended. It is also advised that a referral should be made to the behavioral specialist should be initiated so that an initial line of inquiry is conducted.

Exit Criteria

The student will exit the Alternative Language Program upon reaching the Intermediate fluency level of language development in English. The student will score 67th percentile or better in the Woodcock Munoz Language Dominance Test.

Screening

As the SLL continues through the program, and the teacher, has been able to ascertain that the child is not making normal progress the child is referred to the Instructional Support Team for further assessment and interventions. There are three levels in the screening process. The first level seeks to study the background data collected in the ADELANTE Center, all immediately available data source. The data shall include the following sources: cumulative records, enrollment records, health records and report cards (Chapter 342 Standards, 342.23). The second level of screening includes sensory, motor, speech and language screening data. The figure below presents some issues to consider when evaluating the speech and language of a SLL.

If there is documentation that suggest that the level and rate of retention of the SLL is not on the par with other children in the classroom, then a review of what strategies work for this child will be performed by the Instructional Support Team. The IST is the third level of screening.

The IST process

The IST is responsible for and shall implement a screening process which includes:

- communicating with the parents concerning the student's needs and abilities,
- assessing the degree of need of the SLL,
- recommending specific instructional support services, and
- monitoring the effectiveness of the specific instructional support services and suggesting further instructional support services,
- reviewing the SLL's progress to ensure that the instructional support services, and
- determining whether instructional support services are sufficient to meet the SLL's needs. (Chapter 342 – Standards – 342.23)

During the period of the IST process the following components will be addressed: lesson preparation, comprehensibility, and lesson delivery (Echevarria and Graves, 1998). Some additional suggestions are offered below:

Lesson Preparation

- Select age-appropriate content concepts and vocabulary
- Determine the lesson objective(s)
- Gather supplementary materials to contextualized the lessons
- visuals
- manipulatives
- models
- multimedia
- realia
- Adapt text (outline, rewrite, graphics)
- Outline
- Rewrite
- Add graphic depictions
- Paraphrase orally
- Plan student-centered, real-life activities
- Surveys
- Letter writing
- Simulations
- Constructing models
- Group decision making

Comprehensibility

- Use of appropriate repetition of vocabulary
- Adjust speech to slower rate and pause between phrases
- Slower rate
- Clear enunciation
- Natural pauses
- Use of gestures and body language

Lesson Delivery

- State objectives and introduce key concepts
- Chalkboard
- Flipchart
- Overhead
- Introduce new words – highlight or write them for visual reinforcement
- Posted word bank
- Vocabulary list
- Overhead
- Vary delivery modes
- Explanation
- Modeling
- Demonstration
- Visual presentation
- Provide opportunities to use processing skills
- Problem solving
- Predicting
- Organizing
- Synthesizing
- evaluating
- Use "scaffolding" techniques
- Verbal prompts
- Elaboration
- clarification
- Connect concepts to previous learning
- Tap student knowledge
- Link student's personal experience to topic
- Vary reading options
- Link new concepts to past learning
- Communicate objectives to students
- Chalkboard
- Flipchart
- Overhead

The line of Inquiry

Second language learners often experience behavior difficulties that are more associated with the strain of adapting to the new culture and learning a new language that with some type of disability. If the SLL exhibits withdrawn, bizarre, or aggressive behaviors, attention problems or hyperactivity, a line of inquiry should be initiated.

The first stage of a functional behavioral assessment is to gather broad information about the student's skills, abilities, interests, preferences, general health, and well being. This information is essential in designing effective behavior support plans that assist the student achieve outcomes positively impact on the SLL quality of life.

Six basic questions are addressed during this stage:

1. When is the student likely to engage in the problem behavior?
2. What specific events appear to be contributing to the student's problem?
3. What function(s) does the problem behavior serve for the student?
4. What might the student be communicating

through the problem?
5. When is the student most successful, and therefore less likely to engage in the problem behavior?
6. What other factors might be contributing to the student's problem behavior (including culturally specific behavior)?

Psychological Evaluation

When the SLL has not succeeded in the academic placement, and is exhibiting active or passive behavior, which might be infringing of the child's academic progress, then the SLL, is referred for psychological evaluation. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine if the child is in need of specially designed instruction. The psychological evaluation will answer the following questions:

1. Is the child's performance due to lack of instruction?
2. Is the child's behavior a consequence of language?
3. Is the child's behavior a consequence of the conflict between the in school and the home culture?
4. Is there a presence of a disability?
5. What type of specially designed instruction is needed and in what language?

Second Language Learner's should be assessed with different types of measures, both formal and informal. The two benchmarks that need to be considered by the evaluation are: (1) prerequisite skills (Information from the ADELANTE Center, and (2) what has been the academic program of the child based on the current curriculum and rate of acquisition and retention of the material taught.

IEP and placement in specially designed instruction

At the completion of the evaluation and individualized education program will be developed. IDEA 97 suggests that the team will attempt to determine the following:

1. Language of instruction and performance for each goal, and objective.
2. Care should be given to satisfy the family's language needs with regard to native language use.
3. The bilingual/ESL teacher will address how to incorporate and plan for the contextual learning of the child, specifically the home culture.
4. In making decisions for large-scale assessment, fair practice includes accommodations for both students with disabilities and limited English proficiency.
5. The district is responsible to arrange for the language needs, both oral and written, of parents or family members participating in the IEP Team.

Exit criteria for SLL receiving specially designed instruction

The child will exit specially designed instruction when they are no longer in need. The child will be placed in the regular classroom

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